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# Public Control Over The Observance Of The Rights Of The Convicted In The Field Of Execution Of Punishments

Pavlo Harasym<sup>1\*</sup> Nataliya Ortynska<sup>2</sup> Volodymyr Kantsir<sup>3</sup> Svitlana Soroka<sup>4</sup> Anna Bondarchuk<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Candidate of Law, Associate Professor, Head of the Lviv District Police Department of the Main Directorate of the National Police of Ukraine in the Lviv Region Colonel of police Doctoral Student of Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0336-4710; pavlogarasym @gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Doctor of Law, Associate Professor, Professor of the Department Theories of law and constitutionalism of the Educational and Scientific Institute of Law, Psychology and Innovative Education, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5061-5340. E-mail: natalius2008@ukr.net

<sup>3</sup>Doctor of Law, Professor of the Department of Criminal Law and Procedure of the Training and Research Institute of Law, Psychology and Innovative Education, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ukraine. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3689-4697; kancir 01@ukr.net

<sup>4</sup>Candidate of Law, Associate Professor, Associate Professor at the Department of Criminal Law and Procedure of the Educational and Scientific Institute of Law, Psychology and Innovative Education, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9351-4531; soroka.sv66@gmail.com

<sup>5</sup>PhD in Law, Senior Teacher of the Department of Criminal Law, National Academy of Internal Affairs, Kyiv, Ukraine. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0799-5218; volk28021192@gmail.com

# \*Corresponding Author: Pavlo Harasym

\*Candidate of Law, Associate Professor, Head of the Lviv District Police Department of the Main Directorate of the National Police of Ukraine in the Lviv Region Colonel of police Doctoral Student of Lviv Polytechnic National University, Lviv, Ukraine. ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0336-4710; pavlogarasym@gmail.com

# **Abstract**

The scientific article carried out a scientific analysis of the content and essence of public control over the observance of the rights of convicts in the field of execution of punishments; based on the results of the analysis of scientific points of view regarding public control, the author's definition of the concept of "public control over the observance of the rights of convicts in the field of execution of punishments" was formulated, the semantic meaning of the terms used in this case was clarified; the expediency of making changes to the Criminal Executive Code of Ukraine in terms of enshrining in it a separate chapter that would regulate legal relations regarding public control in the sphere of execution of punishments and probation, as well as provisions that would determine the content, forms and types of public control over the functioning of bodies and institutions execution of punishments.

**Key words:** public control, criminal enforcement activity, sphere of execution of punishments, association of citizens, bodies and institutions of execution of punishments.

## Introduction

Public administration in any country is impossible without appropriate measures to control the course of organizational and administrative relations. Today, Ukraine has a rather difficult situation regarding the process of execution of sentences, which is caused by a high level of crime both among the personnel of the bodies and institutions for the execution of sentences

(Kolb and Popelniuk, 2021, pp. 140–144) and among the convicted (Kolb, 2020, pp. 127–157). At the same time, one of the conditions contributing to this state of affairs in the field of execution of punishments in Ukraine is inadequate public control over the observance of the rights of convicts during the execution of punishments, the legal basis of which is defined in Art. 25 of the Criminal Executive Code of Ukraine.

Of scientific and practical interest are issues related to the content of the concept of "public control in the field of execution of punishments", which has not been definitively formulated at the regulatory, legal and doctrinal level. The practical significance of this concept lies in the fact that, based on the content of its system-forming features, it is possible to form in practice the applied principles of public control in the field of execution of punishments, as well as to modify in this connection the criminal law and other legal principles of activity public associations and individual citizens on issues related to the specified sphere.

It is also worth noting that at the doctrinal level today, Ukraine has not developed clear relevant legal conditions aimed at improving the mechanism of public control in the field of execution of punishments, which, along with the critical state of preventive activities and the low level of public participation in the process of execution – serving of punishments, and became decisive when choosing the topic of scientific development.

Along with this, it is worth paying attention to the fact that public control over the observance of the rights of convicts and other subjects and participants in criminal-executive legal relations has not become the subject of amendments to the criminal-executive legislation. The specified circumstance, as practice shows, is one of the determinants that determine the low level of implementation in the course of criminal enforcement activity of its goals and tasks defined in the law (Part 2 of Article 50 of the Criminal Code and Article 1 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of Ukraine (Golovkin, 2020, pp. 274–280), and also testifies to the improper implementation of international and European standards for the treatment of convicts in this field of public relations. from 19 to 100 cases) criminal offenses are committed in connection with the process of executing and serving sentences. Also, in the process of criminal and executive activity, cases of suicide among convicts, their self-mutilation, traumatism, etc., occur every year, one of the conditions of which is formal, and, in some places, there is no public control over the sphere of execution of punishments in Ukraine at all (Batyrgareeva & Babenko, 2020, p. 164-183).

So, there is a complex applied problem that needs to be solved at the doctrinal (scientific) level - clarifying the content and essence of public control over the observance of the rights of convicts in the field of execution of punishments, the development of well-founded author's proposals aimed at eliminating existing problems in matters of public control, which is carried out according to the process of serving sentences in Ukraine.

# 1. Methodology of the study

The methodological basis is the provisions and conclusions of the general theory of cognition. The scientific article uses works on the problems of criminology, penitentiary, theory of the state and law, administrative law and process.

Taking into account the complex approach to conducting research, the following methods were used in the work: formal-logical, historical, systemic, sociological, comparative-legal, statistical, system-structural analysis. With the help of the historical method, the formation of scientific opinion regarding the essence of public control in the field of execution of punishments has been clarified. The formal-logical method became the basis for the study of certain terms from the specified issues, the scientific elaboration of normative legal acts, the formation of definitions in the sphere of the control function of the public on the legality of the rights of persons in penitentiary institutions and the disclosure of their essence. The use of statistical methods made it possible to form a comprehensive, objective and real picture of the existing situation with compliance with the law in bodies and institutions for the execution of punishments, to analyze law enforcement practice in the specified field of social activity.

# 2. Analysis of recent research

The study of scientific literature showed that such scientists as V. Batyrgareeva and A. Babenko are quite actively involved in the issues of developing the problems of raising the level and changing the content of public control over the process of execution – the serving of punishments (Batyrgareeva & Babenko, 2020, p. 164-183), E. Zakharov (Zakharov, 2023), O. Kolb (Kolb, 2020, pp. 127–157), O. Lysodyed (Lysodyed, 2017, pp. 209-212) and others.

However, until now at the doctrinal level, clear relevant legal conditions aimed at improving the mechanism of public control over the observance of the rights of convicts in the field of execution of punishments have not been developed, which, along with the critical state of preventive activities and the low level of public participation in the specified process, determines the feasibility of a scientific analysis of the specified activity.

### 3. Results and discussion

There is no established understanding of the term "public control" in scientific sources (Zakharov, 2023). In general, in the scientific literature, public control is understood as the public verification by public society of the activities of the state in accordance with its declared goals, the adjustment of these activities and the goals themselves, the subordination of state policy, the activities of its bodies and officials to the interests of society, as well as the supervision of civil society over the activities of state bodies and local self-government bodies, aimed at protecting and ensuring human rights and legitimate interests and fundamental freedoms and respect for them (Zakharov, 2023).

Considering that the phrase "public control" consists of two key words – "public" and "control", we note that in order to formulate the content of its analogue, which concerns one or another field of social relations, including the sphere of execution of punishments, it is necessary to find out essence and semantic meaning of each of them.

In particular, in the explanatory dictionaries, the word "public" means that which arises, occurs in society or concerns society, is connected with it; social (Yeroshenko, 2012, p. 149). That is, in the context of public control, the word "public" should be interpreted as the activity of a certain association of people who set themselves the task of controlling the relevant sphere of public relations.

At the doctrinal (scientific) level, the word "control" is considered as a check of compliance of the controlled object with the established requirements (Yeroshenko, 2012, p. 307). In legal sources, the word "control" (French: "controle" – "check"; from Old French "contre-role" – "a list that has a duplicate for checking") is interpreted as checking the implementation of laws, decisions, etc. (Shemshuchenko, 2001, p. 323). Thus, in a broad sense, the word "control" should be interpreted as an activity aimed at checking some object of observation.

If we take into account the semantic meaning of the word "control", then we can agree with the opinion of V. Garashchuk, who considers control to be control, as well as observation for the purpose of checking to counteract something undesirable, to detect, prevent and stop illegal behavior on the part of anyone (Garashchuk, 2002, p. 253). We believe that in such an understanding of the category "control", in addition to "verification" or "supervision for the purpose of verification", another meaning of this word emerges - opposition to something undesirable.

Summarizing the doctrinal approaches related to the general meaning of the term "public control" (Semenyshyn et al., 2015, pp. 8–20), as well as those scientific developments that are directly related to the clarification of the essence of social monitoring for the observance of rights convicted persons during the execution of criminal sentences, as provided for in Part 2 of Art. 25 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (Kolb O. & Kolb I., pp. 34–45), it is possible to formulate the author's concept of "public control over the observance of the rights of convicts in the sphere of execution of punishments", namely, it is the activity of public bodies regulated at the legislative level associations or their authorized representatives, which is aimed at verifying compliance in the process of execution - the serving of punishments of the rights, legitimate interests and freedoms of the subjects of criminal-enforcement legal relations, as well as guarantees of their implementation, and actions in connection with this within the limits of the law and the powers of comprehensive actions to eliminate, neutralize and counteract the determinants that cause and condition the commission of illegal encroachments on the specified objects of legal protection.

Taking into account the special theoretical and practical value of the terms used in the definition of "public control over the observance of the rights of convicts in the field of execution of punishments" and their system-forming nature, it is necessary to clarify the essence and meaning of the formulated concept, using a logically formal method.

Since the execution of punishment is a dual, inseparable and criminal enforcement activity, scientists understand the process of execution - serving of punishments as a set of uniform procedural requirements that are put forward to the actions of the administration of institutions

of execution of punishments and probation bodies, which are aimed at achieving a result in the form of a realized punishment (Stepanyuk and Avtukhov, 2013, p. 793), which should become the subject of public control. At the same time, it should be borne in mind that the specified type of activity applies not only to those punishments, the exclusive list of which is defined in Art. 51 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, but also other types of the process indicated above (applying to the convicted disciplinary sanctions, observing the rights and legitimate interests of these persons, providing assistance in case of release from punishment or serving it, etc.).

In particular, the rights of convicts are defined in Art. 8 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Ukraine, and the staff of penal institutions – in Art. 18 of the Law of Ukraine "On the State Criminal Enforcement Service of Ukraine".

As for the subjects of criminal-executive legal relations, they should include the personnel of penal institutions and probation bodies, as well as those sentenced to a certain type of criminal punishment. The sphere of execution of punishments is understood as the branch of social activity in which decisions of courts in criminal proceedings, which have acquired legal force in accordance with the law, are implemented, and also exercise their powers as subjects and participants in criminal-executive legal relations. It is the specified objects and their activities that must be checked in the course of public control.

Starting from 2017, when the concept of reform (development) of the penitentiary system was adopted and approved in Ukraine at the level of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, a number of changes of a regulatory, legal, organizational, managerial and other nature took place in the specified area, aimed at the implementation of the specified state program tasks.

In the current Criminal Code of Ukraine, the legal principles of public control over the execution process - the serving of punishments are enshrined in Part 2 of Art. 25, which essentially boils down to the activities of guardianship councils at educational colonies (today, there are only three such penal institutions in Ukraine, the total number of convicts in which is less than 50 people (Data of the State Criminal Enforcement Service for 2021). Of course, that it is impossible to call this type of control over the sphere of execution of punishments effective and meaningful. Moreover, the same provisions of Part 2 of Article 25 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, according to which in the cases established by this Code and laws, act as an additional evaluative argument in this regard of Ukraine, public control over the observance of the rights of convicts during execution of criminal punishments can be carried out by public associations.

As the results of the study of the content of the General and Special parts of the Civil Code of Ukraine showed, any legal mechanisms for ensuring the rights of the public on the specified issues are not fixed in this Code. Also, the specified procedures are not defined in special laws that regulate the activities of public associations, in particular, in the Law of Ukraine "On Public Associations".

The termination of the Law of Ukraine "On Democratic Civilian Control over the Military Organization and Law Enforcement Bodies of the State" and reducing it essentially to the specified control only in the sphere of national security (On National Security of Ukraine. Law of Ukraine, 2018).

Taking into account the current intentions of Ukraine to join the European Union, it would seem that the drafters of the draft Law of Ukraine "On the Penitentiary System" (On the Penitentiary System. Project of the Law of Ukraine, 2021) will approach the solution of the researched issue in a different way. However, as the analysis of its content showed, this, unfortunately, did not happen. Thus, only one legal norm is devoted to the specified problem, namely, Part 1 of Art. 65 of the project, which states that public control over the functioning of bodies and institutions of the penitentiary system is carried out in accordance with the Criminal Executive Code of Ukraine.

Therefore, if nothing is changed today in the content of Part 2 of Art. 25 of the CEC of Ukraine, where the legal principles of public control are established, it will continue to be meaningless and will be one of the circumstances that determines the low level of law and order and the effectiveness of criminal enforcement activities in Ukraine (Lysodyed, 2017, pp. 209–212).

Separate explanations on this matter can be found in the 2017 Concept of Reform (Development) of the Penitentiary System of Ukraine. In particular, among the main tasks of the reform, which are fixed in the specified state program, there is no one related to the modification of public control in the field of execution of punishments. Only in general terms, as it seems, can we talk about this problem in the context of such a task, which was reflected in section I "General Provisions" of the Concept, namely – one of the main tasks of the reform is the development of

legislation in the field of operation of remand centers and institutions for the execution of punishments in accordance with the legislation of the European Union. However, based on the content of the draft Law of Ukraine "On the Penitentiary System", it is premature to talk about it.

In general terms, we are talking about public control over the execution process - the serving of punishments in Ukraine. Thus, in Chapter IV "Ways and Methods of Solving Problems" in this regard, it is stated that further reform of the penitentiary system is expected to be carried out in the following directions: a) improve the legislation regulating the activities of the State Criminal Enforcement Service of Ukraine; b) ensure that the conditions of detention of persons taken into custody and convicted are brought into compliance with the requirements of the European Penitentiary Rules, the creation of conditions of detention that do not violate human dignity, as well as the prevention of violations of the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; c) to implement the recommendations of international organizations on strengthening the guarantees of protection of the rights and freedoms of persons who are in penal institutions and pretrial detention centers; d) create an effective system to combat torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as well as conditions to prevent cases of ill-treatment; e) maximally involve public organizations in working with convicts.

But, despite everything, not a single word that would directly refer to the implementation of public control over the process of execution - the serving of punishments is said in the specified Concept, which only actualizes the need for scientific developments on the specified topic of research, taking into account its theoretical and practical significance for the sphere of execution of punishments in Ukraine.

An additional argument in this sense can be called the conclusions of scientists that the latest changes in the Criminal Code of Ukraine determine the task of introducing new corrections in matters of ensuring the legal status of convicts (Lysodyed, 2017, pp. 229–235).

If in this regard we turn to the provisions of the European Penitentiary Rules, to which the authors of the Concept of Reform (Development) of the Penitentiary System of Ukraine appeal, then not everything is right here with the intentions of the latter and the reality of their implementation of the norms of European law. In particular, Clause 9 Part 1 "Basic Principles" of the European Penitentiary Rules states that all penitentiary institutions must be regularly inspected not only by state bodies, but also subject to independent monitoring. It is in this direction that foreign practice in civilized countries of the world is formulated, but which, unfortunately, is not yet available in Ukraine.

Along with this, it is worth stating that today in Ukraine there are still certain legislative developments that are directly related to the content of public control, namely: 1. For the first time in the history of Ukraine, the content, forms and consequences of the exercise are defined in a single law so far this type of social activity. In particular, Chapter VIII "Public control of the police" of the Law of Ukraine "On the National Police" provides for the following forms and types: a) report on police activity (Article 86); b) adoption of a resolution of no confidence in the heads of police bodies (Article 87); c) interaction between heads of territorial police bodies and representatives of local self-government bodies (Article 88); d) joint projects with the public; e) involvement of the public in considering complaints about the actions or inaction of police officers (Article 90) (On the National Police. Law of Ukraine, 2018).

There is no doubt that precisely this content of public control at the legislative level should be defined in the current CEC of Ukraine, by enshrining in it Chapter 4-1 "Public control over the sphere of execution of punishments and probation", taking as a basis the relevant provisions of the Law of Ukraine "On National police" and removing from Chapter 4 of this Code the provisions of Part Four regarding this type of control (Garasim, 2022, p. 299).

For the first time in the Law of Ukraine "On National Security" Art. 10 "Public supervision", which, in particular, states that: "a) citizens of Ukraine participate in the implementation of civil control through public associations of which they are members, deputies of local councils, personally by applying to the Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine with of human rights or to state bodies in accordance with the procedure established by the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine "On Public Associations" and other laws of Ukraine. At the same time, the sphere of public supervision, as it follows from the content of Part 1 of Art. 10 of this Law, may be limited exclusively by the Law of Ukraine "On State Secrets"; b) when carrying out civil control, the public has the opportunity to: receive relevant information from state bodies in the prescribed

manner, except for that which has limited access; conduct research; publicly present their results; to create public funds, centers, teams of experts, etc. for this purpose; conduct public examination of draft laws, decisions, programs, present their conclusions and proposals for consideration by relevant state bodies; participate in public discussions and open parliamentary hearings on relevant issues" (On the National Security of Ukraine. Law of Ukraine, 2018).

We believe that taking into account the provisions of Art. 24 "Visiting institutions for the execution of punishments" of the CEC of Ukraine, which defines the subjects of public control in the field of execution of punishments, the current Code would be logical to supplement Art. 25-1 "Content, forms and types of public control over the functioning of bodies and institutions for the execution of punishments" and placed in the special chapter 4-1, which was discussed above (Harasym, 2022, p. 300).

The draft Law "On the Penitentiary System" enshrines provisions on public control not only of observing the rights of convicts during the execution of punishments, as provided for in Part 2 of Art. 25 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine, but also on the functioning of bodies and institutions of the penitentiary system, which is a broader type of activity related to the process of execution – serving sentences (On the penitentiary system. Draft Law of Ukraine, 2021). In general, while supporting the normative-legal approach to issues of public control in the field of execution of punishments specified in the Project, it is worth pointing out its simplification and formality, since it does not contain those areas of it, which, in particular, are defined in the Laws of Ukraine "On the National Police" and "National Security".

Therefore, in our opinion, the modification of the content of public control in the studied field of social activity in Ukraine is obvious and objectively conditioned, taking into account both the deterministic complex that causes and conditions extraordinary incidents in institutions of execution of punishments, and the modern trends of making changes and additions, as well as the formation of new laws that regulate the activities of other law enforcement agencies and that, in this connection, formulate the content of public control in a new way.

#### **Conclusions**

Public control over the observance of the rights of convicts in the field of execution of punishments should be interpreted as the activity of public associations or their authorized representatives, regulated at the legislative level, aimed at verifying the observance of the rights, legitimate interests and freedoms of the subjects of criminal enforcement in the process of execution and serving of punishments legal relations, as well as guarantees of their implementation, and in connection with this, taking comprehensive actions within the limits of the law and powers to eliminate, neutralize and counter the determinants that cause and condition the commission of illegal encroachments on the specified objects of legal protection. In the current Criminal Executive Code of Ukraine, a separate chapter "Public control over the sphere of execution of punishments and probation" should be provided, taking as a basis the relevant provisions of the Law of Ukraine "On the National Police" and removing from chapter 4 of this Code the provisions of part four regarding this type of control.

Taking into account the provisions of Article 24 "Visiting institutions for the execution of punishments" of the Criminal and Executive Code of Ukraine, which defines the subjects of public control in the field of execution of punishments, the current Code should be supplemented with the corresponding Article 25-1 "Content, forms and types of public control over the functioning of bodies and penal institutions".

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